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Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission

(for the period from 21 March to 15 September 2002)

I. Introduction

1. The present report provides an account of activities of the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission (UNIKOM) during the past six months carried out in accordance with the mandate entrusted to it by the Security Council in resolutions 687 (1991) of 3 April 1991, 689 (1991) of 9 April 1991 and 806 (1993) of 5 February 1993.

II. Main developments

2. During the period under review, UNIKOM continued to monitor the demilitarized zone, which extends 10 kilometres into Iraq and five kilometres into Kuwait, and the Khawr' Abd Allah waterway along the maritime boundary between the two countries. The situation in the area of operation remained generally calm. UNIKOM carried out its monitoring operations from fixed observation posts and through patrols by land, sea and air. However, at the request of the Iraqi authorities, UNIKOM helicopter flights remained suspended on the Iraqi side of the border, as they have been since December 1998 (see S/1999/330, para. 2).

3. In a letter dated 20 June 2002, the Iraqi authorities advised that UNIKOM could not continue to use the pier at M2 for UNIKOM's patrol boats, as the service of the pier was required for Iraqi national maritime activities. Noting the implications of this decision on UNIKOM's patrolling of the waterway, the Force Commander wrote to the Iraqi authorities and approached them during subsequent liaison meetings, urging them to reconsider the decision. The Iraqi authorities agreed to send a written authorization for UNIKOM patrol boats to use the pier for up to six months more until the Mission could make alternative arrangements. At the same time, UNIKOM is consulting with the two host countries to build a new pier, subject to availability of funds, in order to ensure the long-term viability and effective operation of the maritime sector.

4. There were 278 violations of the demilitarized zone, of which 233 were air violations, 21 maritime violations, 20 ground violations and four weapons violations. Most of the 233 air violations involved jet aircraft that were heard, but were flying at altitudes too high to be observed or identified. However, a few jet aircraft were flying low enough to be identified. These included F-15, F-16 and A-10 aircraft and helicopters seen flying over the demilitarized zone. The 21 maritime violations involved Iraqi patrol boats, fishing boats and tugboat and maintenance vessels, all seen operating in Kuwaiti waters. The 20 ground violations included cases involving 2 Kuwaiti military vehicles seen moving inside the demilitarized zone, 14 Iraqi civilians driving their vehicles on separate occasions on X-ray Road on the Kuwaiti side of the border and Iraqi military personnel seen in a vehicle moving inside the demilitarized zone on four separate occasions. Of the four weapons violations, two related to a member of the Iraqi military carrying a 7.62 calibre rifle, one to Iraqi military personnel carrying two heavy machine guns in a truck and one to an Iraqi policeman carrying an AK-47 rifle inside the demilitarized zone.

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5. Iraqi authorities lodged all of the 73 complaints received. Most of them related to air violations of Iraqi territory. Iraqi officials continued to demand that UNIKOM should report a much higher number of air violations and identify the type and nationality of the aircraft. UNIKOM has continued to advise Iraq that it does not have the technical means or capability to definitively identify all the aircraft flying over the demilitarized zone. Notwithstanding these limitations, UNIKOM has been reporting as violations all flights that it has observed or heard flying over the demilitarized zone.

6. The 30 incidents reported by UNIKOM over the past six months included occasions when Iraqi youths threw stones at United Nations vehicles. On one such occasion, a United Nations Military Observer was injured and there was minor damage to a United Nations vehicle. There were also occasions when Kuwaiti police refused to allow United Nations vehicles to pass through gates in the demilitarized zone, which constituted a restriction of UNIKOM's freedom of movement inside the demilitarized zone. UNIKOM protested these incidents to the liaison officers of Iraq and Kuwait and urged them to take measures to prevent their recurrence.

7. During the period under review, the German Medical Unit continued to provide valuable medical support to UNIKOM and to assist the neighbouring Iraqi population. Humanitarian assistance included seven evacuations of Iraqi civilians injured by explosions of landmines and other ordnance. Mines and unexploded ordnance continue to pose a serious danger both inside and outside the demilitarized zone, particularly on the Iraqi side, where the majority of the victims are children. Injured or sick Iraqi nationals in search of medical assistance often appeared spontaneously at UNIKOM's gates either at its Headquarters in Umm Qasr or at its patrol and observation bases, especially in the southern sector. Kuwaiti authorities continued to cooperate with UNIKOM in emergencies by allowing United Nations helicopters to fly over Kuwaiti air space carrying Iraqi nationals in dire need of medical attention, thereby saving many lives that might otherwise have been lost.

8. On 18 March 2002, the Delta Crossing site on the Kuwaiti side of the border was flooded, causing severe damage to United Nations equipment and rendering the site unusable. The location of this crossing site in low terrain makes it vulnerable to recurrent flooding. In the aftermath of this flood, UNIKOM selected an alternative site in the Southern Sector, 17 kilometres north of the damaged site. With the agreement and support of the Kuwaiti authorities, UNIKOM has begun work for the construction of new facilities there.

9. UNIKOM is in the process of reviewing the agreement with the Kuwaiti Government regarding the maritime sector in order to ensure adequate equipment and timely maintenance for its operation. The proposed arrangement envisages streamlining the support provided throughout the Mission, with Kuwait continuing to provide the capital support and UNIKOM assuming responsibility for the maintenance and service support at Warbah Island.

10. The UNIKOM communications tower at Sanam Hill on the Iraqi side of the demilitarized zone has become increasingly congested with the addition of items of technological equipment over the years. In addition, the tower has been severely damaged and is in danger of collapsing. UNIKOM has been engaged in prolonged consultations with the Iraqi authorities to replace the existing facility with a higher self-supporting tower. Since the discussions with the Iraqi authorities appear to be inconclusive, UNIKOM is investigating alternative arrangements on the Kuwaiti side, which would be significantly more expensive owing to the topography of the area.

11. UNIKOM continued to make weekly visits to Umm Qasr harbour without hindrance. At the port, UNIKOM's military observers were able to observe commodity shipments proceeding normally under the "oil-for-food" programme.

12. UNIKOM maintained close and regular liaison with the authorities of both Iraq and Kuwait at various levels, including visits by the Force Commander to Baghdad and Kuwait City and through the UNIKOM liaison offices in the two capitals.

13. During the period under review, UNIKOM received visitors including high-ranking officials from 18 Member States. The visitors, mainly from troop-contributing countries, came to the demilitarized zone to meet military observers from their respective countries and to familiarize themselves with UNIKOM's operations. Kuwaiti and Iraqi officials also visited the demilitarized zone on their respective sides and met with UNIKOM officials as part of liaison consultations.

14. The team leader for the return of the Kuwaiti archives, Richard Foran, visited UNIKOM from 18 to 28 August 2002 to discuss how UNIKOM could assist in facilitating the return of Kuwaiti property with the full agreement and cooperation of the Governments of Iraq and Kuwait.

III. Organizational matters

15. As at 15 September 2002, the overall strength of UNIKOM was 1,327 consisting of the following components:

(a) A total of 194 military observers from 31 Member States: Argentina (4), Austria (2), Bangladesh (6), China (11), Denmark (5), Fiji (7), Finland (7), France (11), Ghana (6), Greece (4), Hungary (5), India (8), Indonesia (6), Ireland (6), Italy (5), Kenya (4), Malaysia (6), Nigeria (7), Pakistan (8), Poland (5), Romania (6), the Russian Federation (11), Senegal (6), Singapore (2), Sweden (2), Thailand (7), Turkey (6), the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (11), the United States (11), Uruguay (6) and Venezuela (3);

(b) An infantry battalion of 775 from Bangladesh;

(c) An engineering unit of 42 from Argentina;

(d) A logistics unit of 38 from Argentina;

(e) A helicopter unit of 36 from Bangladesh;

(f) A medical unit of 14 from Germany;

(g) A total of 228 civilian staff, of whom 60 were recruited internationally and 168 locally.

IV. Financial aspects

16. The General Assembly, in its resolution 56/297 A of 27 June 2002, appropriated $52,866,800 gross for the maintenance of UNIKOM for the period from 1 July 2002 to 30 June 2003, subject to review by the Security Council with regard to the question of termination or continuation of the Mission. Two thirds of the cost of the Mission, equivalent to $35.2 million, is to be funded through voluntary contributions from the Government of Kuwait.

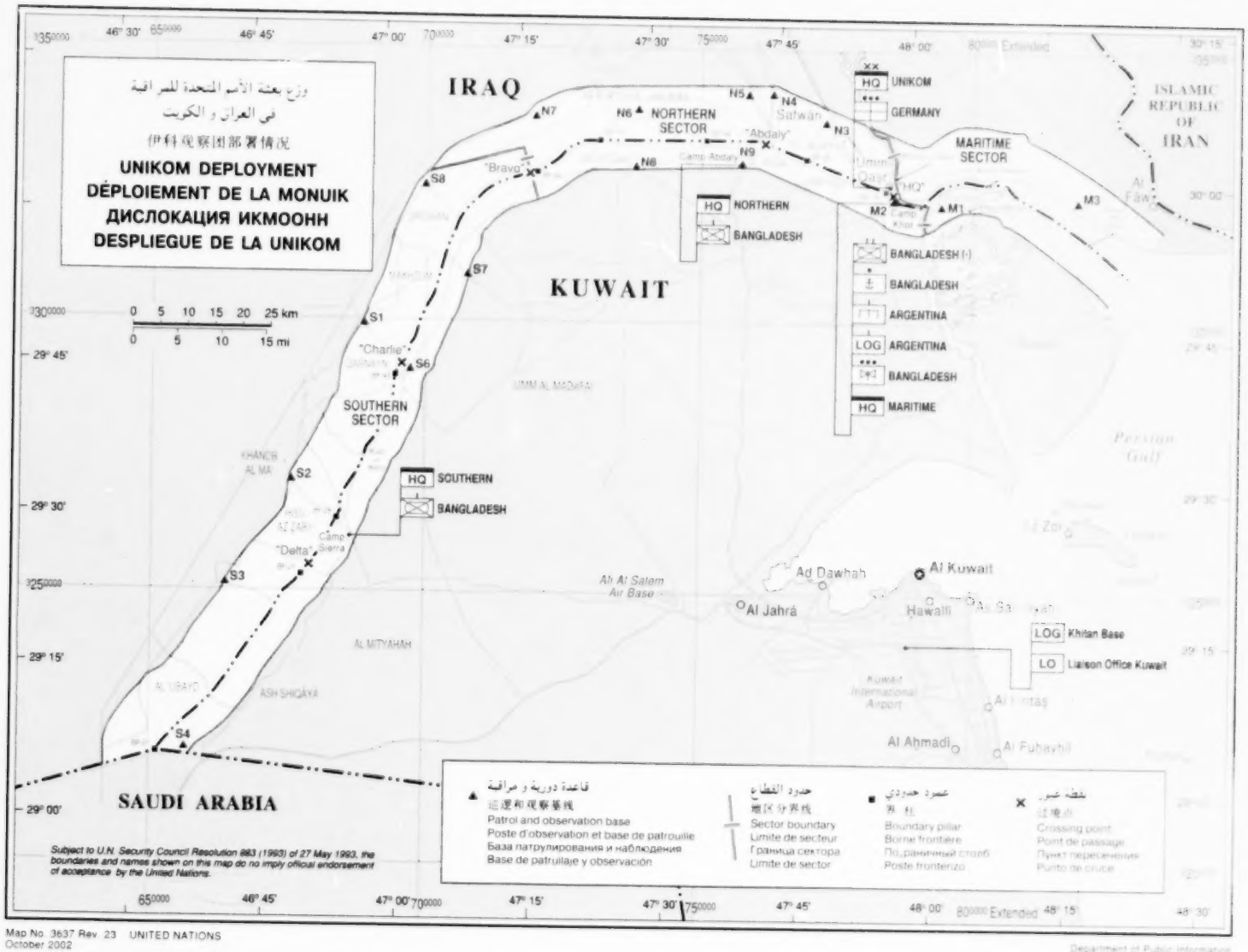
17. As at 13 September 2002, unpaid assessed contributions to the Special Account for UNIKOM for the period from inception to 31 August 2002 amounted to $16 million. The unpaid assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations amounted to $1,781 million.

V. Observations

18. During the period under review, the situation along the border between Iraq and Kuwait remained generally quiet. UNIKOM continued to carry out its responsibilities effectively, thereby contributing to the maintenance of calm and stability in the border area. In undertaking these tasks, it continued to receive the cooperation of the Iraqi and Kuwaiti authorities.

19. However, UNIKOM is operating in an uncertain environment, due to political and military developments in the region. UNIKOM will continue to be vigilant, making the necessary arrangements to maintain its operational effectiveness, while also making contingency arrangements for any eventuality that could occur in its area of responsibility. I recommend that the Mission be maintained.

20. In conclusion, I wish to pay tribute to the Force Commander, Major-General Moreno, and to the men and women under his command for the manner in which they have discharged their duties. Their discipline and bearing have been of a high order, reflecting credit on themselves, their countries and the United Nations.



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